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SUBJECT: Support for Egypt's Ministerial Conference on  
Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Collaboration with  
IPAPI

REF: 2007 State 159330

#### SUMMARY

¶1. This is an action request for Embassies to demarche host governments (foreign, health and agriculture ministries) to urge high-level participation in this year's major international conference on avian and pandemic influenza, to take place in Egypt October 25-26. (See para 7.) End Summary.

BACKGROUND: Global Engagement on Avian and Pandemic Influenza

¶2. The threat is real: Highly pathogenic avian influenza continues to spread in birds, and experts fear that the H5N1 strain of the virus someday will mutate to become a deadly human pandemic. In May, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Margaret Chan labeled pandemic influenza (in addition to food security and climate change) as one of three global crises "looming on the horizon. The threat has by no means receded, and we would be very unwise to let down our guard, or slacken our preparedness measures." In early August, the UK Cabinet Office published its "National Risk Register" and told the media that a pandemic influenza is the most imminent and serious danger to the UK over the next five years.

¶3. U.S. leadership: Governments and international and regional organizations continue to regard preventing and responding to outbreaks of H5N1 in poultry and other animals, as well as preparing for a potentially catastrophic human pandemic, as priorities of the highest order. These goals have remained key U.S. foreign policy objectives since President Bush announced the formation of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI) at the UN General Assembly in September 2005. IPAPI works closely with bilateral partners and with the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC), WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Organization for Animal Health (known by its initials in French as OIE), and with regional organizations such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the European Union and Commission. Through the Security and Prosperity Partnership, the U.S., Canada and Mexico trilaterally are implementing the North American Plan for Avian and Pandemic Influenza.

¶4. U.S. national strategy: The U.S. strategy is to increase global capability and action to address the threat in three ways: (1) preparedness and

communication; (2) surveillance and detection; and (3) response and containment. The U.S. National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza and National Implementation Plan can be found at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov). The Department of State is responsible for coordinating U.S. international engagement to implement the strategy. The Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, oversees this effort on behalf of the Secretary. The Special Representative on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, John Lange, reports to the Under Secretary and heads the Avian Influenza Action Group (G/AIAG), spearheading the USG's overall international response to avian and pandemic influenza.

¶5. The Sharm el-Sheikh conference: Beginning with the meeting of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Washington in October 2005, there has been a series of major international conferences organized by governments with strong support from the USG, IPAPI, the UN System, and the European Union/Commission (see reftel regarding the New Delhi conference in December 2007). The Government of Egypt (GOE), in collaboration with IPAPI, will host the next such conference, the Sixth International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, in Sharm el-Sheikh October 25-26, 2008. The conference will serve to advance the unprecedented cooperation among foreign, health and agriculture ministries to confront a global threat. The GOE has issued invitations through its Embassies and its Mission to the UN in New York and at WHO and FAO conferences. The USG, through USAID, is providing \$500,000 in assistance to the GOE for the conference and we look forward to a successful event. Posts are requested to demarche host

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SUBJECT: Support for Egypt's Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Collaboration with IPA governments to ensure wide, high-level attendance at the conference. The USG will be announcing another generous pledge of international assistance at the conference, and potential donor governments should be encouraged also to announce new pledges.

¶6. Additional information: For more information on the subjects covered in this cable, go to the following websites:  
[www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov): General USG information on pandemic influenza.  
[www.state.gov/g/avianflu](http://www.state.gov/g/avianflu) : Fact sheets on U.S. international activities related to avian and pandemic influenza  
<http://www.imcapi2008.gov.eg/> : Egypt's International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza

#### ACTION REQUEST

¶7. Using the non-paper below, posts are requested to approach foreign, health and agriculture/livestock ministries of host governments to encourage high-level attendance, preferably at the ministerial level, at the conference and (where appropriate) pledges of assistance. Please report on results. We are especially eager to hear the plans of health and agriculture ministries, since coordination and cooperation between them is essential. If for some reason a ministry indicates it has not received an invitation, please alert Department (G/AIAG, [BoguessSM@state.gov](mailto:BoguessSM@state.gov)) immediately.

#### BEGIN TEXT:

-- The spread of avian influenza and the possibility of a catastrophic human pandemic continue to pose a serious threat worldwide. The threat is as great today as it was a few years ago.

-- Highly pathogenic avian influenza has now been found in over 60 nations. The World Bank estimates that two percent of all poultry in the developing world have died or been culled since 2003 as a result of avian influenza. The disease is now endemic in poultry in several countries in Asia and Africa. Of almost 400 confirmed human cases of avian influenza, most have involved close contact between infected poultry and human victims and over 60 percent of those victims have died.

-- Although no sustained and efficient human-to-human transmission of avian influenza has yet occurred, the potential exists that the H5N1 virus or some other circulating strain could mutate into a form that would lead to a global human pandemic. Experts predict that a pandemic as severe as that of 1918 could kill tens of millions of people worldwide.

-- The U.S. Government continues to be engaged at the highest levels in efforts to contain the spread of avian influenza and to prepare for a possible pandemic. We urge all nations to maintain their focus on this threat as a high priority for action to build capacity in the fight against avian and pandemic influenza. This global effort will also help improve preparedness for other emerging infectious diseases.

-- Beginning with the meeting of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Washington in October 2005, governments and international and regional organizations have participated in a series of global conferences involving ministers and senior officials from foreign, health, and agriculture/livestock ministries: Beijing, China (January 2006); Vienna, Austria (June 2006); Bamako, Mali (December 2006); and New Delhi, India (December 2007). The conferences have generated an unprecedented level of cross-sector cooperation among officials dealing with animal and human health. At the New Delhi conference, the Government of India proposed a "Vision and Road Map" for focused action on avian influenza control and pandemic preparedness. Governments and regional organizations pledged additional funds for international assistance, bringing the total to \$2.7 billion.

-- The Government of Egypt, in collaboration with the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza and international and regional organizations, is organizing the next major, international, ministerial-level conference on avian and pandemic influenza in Sharm el-Sheikh on October 25-26, 2008. Attendees will include ministers and other senior

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officials from foreign, health, and agriculture ministries around the world as well as the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator and top officials from the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, and the World Bank.

-- The agenda for the conference, which will be opened by the Egyptian Prime Minister, includes a review of best practices and challenges related to control of highly pathogenic avian influenza in animals (bio-security, vaccination, governance of veterinary services, socio-economic implications, and risk communication); a review of best practices and challenges related to pandemic preparedness and response (containment, multi-sectoral planning, humanitarian preparedness, risk communication and

inter-country pandemic preparedness); and development of a long-term strategy for control of avian influenza and other diseases emerging at the animal-human interface.

-- U.S. Government goals for the conference include the following:

- a) Ensuring, on an urgent basis, continued global action by governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to build long-term capacity to confront the spread of avian influenza and to prepare for a potential human pandemic;
- b) Improving communication and transparency in reporting influenza outbreaks and sharing virus samples in order to track changes in the virus for purposes of planning timely interventions to prevent human infections and, more broadly, for the benefit of global public health;
- c) Demonstrating that the U.S. Government, along with other donors, is meeting its commitments and increasing its international assistance to support nations in confronting avian and pandemic influenza; and
- d) Strengthening international cooperation on avian and pandemic influenza and, more broadly, on emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases at the animal/human/ecosystem interface.

-- The U.S. delegation is expected to include a Cabinet Secretary and very senior representatives from the Departments of State, Health and Human Services, and Agriculture, plus the U.S. Agency for International Development.

-- This strong U.S. delegation reflects the seriousness of this issue and the importance of the Sharm el-Sheikh conference. Accordingly, we hope your government will also be represented at the ministerial level at the conference. We would appreciate knowing your government's plans and we ask that you inform the Government of Egypt of those plans if you have not already done so.

Additional point for WHA Embassies (other than Ottawa and Mexico), since WHA countries may dismiss the seriousness of the problem because the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus has not yet appeared in the Western Hemisphere:

-- Given the possibility that the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of avian influenza may soon spread to the Western Hemisphere, it is important that Latin American and Caribbean nations attend the conference to understand current international community efforts to thwart the virus in birds and to redouble efforts to prepare to contain a human pandemic.

Additional point for potential donor governments:

-- The Sharm el-Sheikh conference will include a session for the announcement of additional pledges of international assistance. We hope that you can pledge new or additional assistance, as well as meet past commitments to fight avian and pandemic influenza and prepare. The U.S. Government, which to date has pledged a total of \$629 million in international assistance, plans to announce additional funding greater than our \$195 million pledge in December 2007 in New Delhi.

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